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Government  
Publications

## FACTS ON PERSONAL WATERCRAFT

- 1 A personal watercraft (PWC) is a **powerboat**. You and your craft are subject to the same safe boating concerns, rules and regulations as other boaters.
- 2 A personal watercraft is powered by a waterjet pump rather than an external propeller.
- 3 These boats are operated by a person positioned **on**, rather than **within** the confines of the hull.
- 4 Some personal watercraft are designed for single riders, others for two or more people.
- 5 While there is currently no legal minimum age requirement for operating a PWC, some manufacturers recommend a minimum age of 16 years.



## RIDE SMART A RIDERS GUIDE TO PERSONAL WATERCRAFT



LIFESAVING SOCIETY  
*The Lifeguarding Experts*

A Water Smart™ Message from The Lifesaving Society in Partnership with:

Fisheries and Oceans Canada  
Garde côtière

Canada

## WATER SMART RESPONSIBILITY

As a personal watercraft rider, I practice safe boating:

- I will assume responsibility for the safe operation of this powerboat and the safety of my passengers.
- I will respect the rights of others in, on and near the water.
- I have practiced personal watercraft operation under the instruction and supervision of a mature and experienced rider.
- I will never carry non-swimmers.

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## RECKLESSNESS SPOILS THE FUN OF IT ALL

Most personal watercraft injuries result from **COLLISIONS** caused by rider

- INEXPERIENCE
- CARELESSNESS
- OVERCONFIDENCE

## Get the training

Learning to ride a PWC takes practice. Get the training. And give yourself plenty of time to practice.

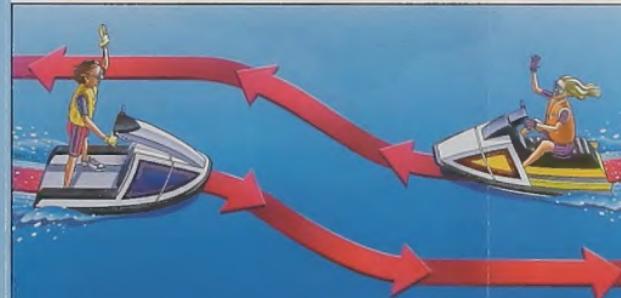
Safe boating instruction is available from a variety of sources. To make inquiries, contact:

- Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons
- Watercraft Training Centre
- Your local PWC dealer

Read the Canadian Coast Guard's Safe Boating Guide. Always operate your PWC responsibly and in accordance with the manufacturer's directions.

## Coast Guard Toll Free Hotline

For answers to your boating safety questions, call the Canadian Coast Guard Hotline 1-800-267-6687.



## RIDE SMART, RIDE SOBER

Never operate your personal watercraft under the influence of alcohol. Alcohol impairs your ability to make good quick decisions and execute them – qualities which are critical when driving a fast and manoeuvrable boat like a PWC.

Moreover, driving a vehicle – including any vessel – under the influence of alcohol or drugs is punishable under the Criminal Code of Canada. Operating a boat while consuming alcohol is illegal.

## BY LAW

Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) or lifejackets, approved by Transport Canada, are required by law for each person on board. Since there is unlikely to be room to store PFDs on board, riders must wear them. (The law may soon require that PFDs or lifejackets be worn on PWCs.) Wet suits or dry suits can provide for rider comfort and protection against cold, but they are not approved PFDs.

A sound signalling device such as a whistle is also required by law. In addition, the law may soon require the following:

- A 15 m buoyant towing/heaving line.
- A heliograph or unbreakable mirror.
- A watertight flashlight with 2 D-cell batteries.
- A fire extinguisher (if there is stowage).

In some provinces including Ontario, boating regulations limit the top speed of all vessels within 100 feet or 30 metres of shore to 10 km/hr.

Personal watercraft must be licensed. Contact your Canada Customs or Coast Guard office to obtain licensing information.

## LEARN THE RULES OF THE ROAD

Stay well clear of all other boats and yield to them since they are less manoeuvrable. When in the vicinity of other boats you are obligated to maintain speed and course. When meeting head on, Keep Right.

The Lifesaving Society thanks the Canadian Coast Guard, Canadian Power and Sail Squadrons and the Watercraft Training Centre for assistance in the development of this brochure.



Please complete and return to the:

### Lifesaving Society

322 Consumers Road, North York, Ontario M2J 1P8  
Telephone: (416) 490-8844 Fax (416) 490-8766

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I will support Drowning Prevention through my tax-deductible donation!

### Enclosed is my donation of

\$10.00  \$25.00  \$40.00  \$100.00

I prefer to give \_\_\_\_\_

Cheque (made payable to the Lifesaving Society)  
 VISA  MasterCard

Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Ontario Branch Registered Charity No. 0264846-21



**LIFESAVING SOCIETY**  
*The Lifeguarding Experts*

Drowning is the second leading cause of accidental death for people under 55 years of age. This makes drowning a significant health and safety issue in Canada. It also makes drowning prevention the number one priority of the Lifesaving Society.

Since 1988, the Lifesaving Society has been researching and reporting on drowning and preventable water-related deaths. Our ongoing drowning research provides the critical fact base to guide our annual Water Smart Drowning Prevention Campaign. The Water Smart Campaign delivers personal lifesaving education to modify high-risk behaviour. Water Smart is designed to increase awareness of the responsibility that individuals assume for themselves and others when participating in recreational activities around the water.

We need your support to help deliver important Water Smart education messages. Send your donation to the Lifesaving Society (see other side).

We are pleased to acknowledge the support of the associate members of the Lifesaving Society's Water Smart Campaign:

Canadian Power & Sail Squadrons  
Canadian Safe Boating Council  
Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs  
Ontario Provincial Police  
Ontario Medical Association  
Royal Canadian Mounted Police  
SportSmart Canada  
Watercraft Training Centre

The Lifesaving Society is a national, charitable organization working to prevent drowning and water-related injuries through lifeguard and lifesaving training programs and public education. Ontario Branch Registered Charity No. 0264846-21.

\*Water Smart is a registered trademark of The Royal Life Saving Society Canada.

## LOOK OUT!

Ride defensively. Look out for other boats and never assume they are looking out for you. Because of their high speed and relatively low profile, PWCs are sometimes difficult for other boaters to spot. Keep a look out to avoid:

- SWIMMERS AND MARKED SWIMMING AREAS
- OTHER BOATS
- WATER SKIERS
- DOCKS, RAFTS
- UNDERWATER OBSTRUCTIONS LIKE ROCK, SHOALS AND SAND BARS



### Look out!

Always look both ways and behind you before making turns or rapid course changes. Keep your distance from other boats.

### Look out!

Wake jumping can damage your machine and lead to personal injury.

Most personal watercraft do not have the lights which are required by law to operate at night.

Most personal watercraft are not designed for towing water-skiers.

Never exceed the craft's maximum load or carry more passengers than the craft is designed for.

## THE COLD WET FACTS ABOUT COLD WATER

Prolonged immersion in cold water can result in a life-threatening drop in body temperature (hypothermia). Hypothermia can also be caused by chilling wind, rain or even perspiration.

### To avoid danger

Prepare for cold air or water by wearing a wet or dry suit for protection against the elements. Wear your Personal Flotation Device. Attach a whistle to it so you can signal for help if necessary.

### If you end up in the water - and you will

Climb back onto your craft as soon as possible. Cold water robs body heat up to 25 times faster than air of the same temperature.

### Stay with your craft

Do not try to swim to shore in cold water unless you are very close to safety and you have no expectation of speedy assistance.

Swimming, treading water and survival floating (drownproofing) all use up valuable energy and result in rapid loss of body heat. If you can't get out of the water, wearing your PFD will help increase your survival time by keeping your head out of the water and minimizing the amount of energy you need to spend to keep afloat.



## THE WATER SMART PWC RIDER TEST

TRUE FALSE

1	A personal watercraft is considered a powerboat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2	Most PWC injuries result from collisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
3	By law, the speed limit for any vessel within 100 feet of shore is 10 km/hr.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4	Men are four times more likely to die in a boating accident than women.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5	PWC require an approved PFD for each person on board.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
6	PWC require a sound signalling device.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Cold water robs body heat 25 times faster than air of the same temperature.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
8	Wake jumping can damage a PWC.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
9	PWC are subject to the same "rules of the road" as other boats.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10	By law, personal watercraft must be licensed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

All statements are true.



**LIFESAVING SOCIETY**  
*The Lifeguarding Experts*

## 10 WATER SMART MOVES

- 1 WEAR YOUR LIFEJACKET OR PFD**  
An approved PFD is required by law for each person on board. (The law may soon require you to wear it.) Remember, IT WON'T WORK IF YOU DON'T WEAR IT.
- 2 DON'T DRINK AND RIDE**  
Alcohol impairs your ability to make good quick decisions. This is critical when operating a vessel as fast and manoeuvrable as a PWC.
- 3 KNOW YOUR CRAFT**  
Study the owner's manual and practice handling of your PWC under experienced supervision and in open water well away from other boaters.
- 4 GET THE TRAINING**  
Learn the common boating rules, regulations and safe practices.
- 5 LOOK OUT**  
RIDE DEFENSIVELY. Collisions with other boats or stationary objects like rafts or docks are the number one cause of PWC injuries.
- 6 WATCH THE WEATHER**  
Check the weather forecast before starting out. Be alert for the wave, wind, cloud changes that signal bad weather approaching.
- 7 BE PREPARED FOR COLD**  
Cold water robs body heat up to 25 times faster than air of the same temperature. When you fall off your craft into cold water, reboard as soon as possible.
- 8 KNOW THE AREA**  
Don't assume the water is clear of obstructions. Rocks, shoals, sand bars, submerged pilings can all seriously damage the craft or those on board. Check marine charts and stay in marked channels.
- 9 CARRY THE GEAR**  
Besides approved PFDs and a sound-signalling device (like a whistle), it is prudent (and may soon become law) to carry a tow rope, a mirror or some small type-B flares in a watertight container.
- 10 DON'T RIDE AT NIGHT**  
Most PWCs are not made with the lights required by law for night riding.

A Water Smart message from the Lifesaving Society - Canada's lifeguarding experts.